



The Secretary of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

October 21, 1997

**MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
DEFENSE PROGRAMS**

DIRECTOR OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

DIRECTOR OF ENERGY RESEARCH

FROM:

FEDERICO PEÑA

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Federico Peña", is written over the printed name.

SUBJECT:

**Assessment of Hazards Associated with Chemical and
Radioactive Waste Storage Tanks and Ancillary
Equipment**

In response to the May 1997 explosion at the Hanford Plutonium Reclamation Facility and consistent with the Secretary's August 4, 1997, memorandum, I am aware that all sites are currently reassessing facilities and operations for chemical and radiological vulnerabilities. The status of these assessments and related hazard-remediation efforts is to be reported to Program Secretarial Officers and to the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health by November 1997.

This effort needs to place particular emphasis on the hazards associated with chemical and radioactive waste storage tanks--and ancillary piping and equipment--at Hanford and several other Department of Energy sites. Therefore, I request that your offices work with the responsible DOE operations and field offices to ensure that all waste storage tanks are identified, fully characterized, and addressed in the November status reports. I am particularly interested in confirming, as soon as possible, and with sound technical expertise, that sites understand all possible chemical reactions in these tanks and ancillary equipment. The sites' November status reports also should provide detailed provisions on actions to be taken to complete these evaluations, as well as appropriate corrective actions.

In addition, please ensure that the sites provide you with immediate notification--and that you then provide me with written notification--at the time that specific tanks are identified as posing potential safety hazards (e.g., the threat of a criticality accident or chemical reactions that could result in an explosion) or for which potential hazards have not been identified and addressed in related safety authorization basis documentation. When providing me with such notification,

please identify the specific steps that you will take to further evaluate the situation and any immediate actions or controls needed to ensure that the tanks are maintained in a safe condition until the ultimate disposition of the tank contents.

I appreciate your attention to this important safety matter.

cc: Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health